

## OFFICIAL MOURNING.

THE DEATH OF MRS. HARRISON  
RECALLS OTHER FATALITIES.

The Wives of Five White House Employees Have Died During the Harrison Administration—Death Has Also Played Havoc in the Cabinet Families.

[Special Correspondence.]

WASHINGTON, Nov. 9.—Another death in the White House! Will there never be an end of tragedies in this famous mansion? Probably not, for though the seat of power—the highest social and

political pedestal in the land—it cannot escape the visitations of the dread monster. Death is no respecter of persons, and palace and hovel, prince and pauper, must alike bow the knee to his tyranny. As the White House record

stands today, its first and last deaths were in the Harrison family. Never before, however, has an administration

been so sadly marked by the tragedy of nature in the White House and the immediate circle revolving around it.

The president's wife died last week. Less than two years ago the wife of his

private secretary, Mr. Halford, passed away. For several weeks the private

secretary himself lay at death's door in the executive mansion. Secretary Pruden, of the White House staff, lost his

wife early in the present year. Since Harrison became president the wives of

three other White House employees have died, and four or five children have been

lost from the White House circle. In all these afflictions the president and his

late wife performed many acts of delicate sympathy, endeavoring themselves to be bereaved. Since he came to Wash-

ington as president General Harrison has lost a sister, and Mrs. Harrison's sister,

Mrs. Scott-Lord, died two years ago.

Death has played havoc in the cabinet families too. Walker Blaine died with-

in a stone's throw of the executive man-

sion from a cold taken at a White House reception. His brother Emmons fol-

lowed him last summer, just after Mr. Blaine's resignation from the cabinet.

Before that Mrs. Blaine had lost a sister. Other cabinet families have had bereave-

ments among their near kin, but the most terrible tragedy of all, saddest

scene perhaps the great East room of the White House ever knew—and it has had

more than its share of tragedies—was when, in the dawn of morning, fire and

smoke combined to rob Secretary Tracy of his wife and daughter.

Their funeral was held in the White

House, and to this day I find it impos-

sible to enter the palatial East room,

even on such occasions as state re-

ceptions, when the great apartment is

thronged with beauty and fashion, and

alight with smiles and laughter, without

thinking of the afternoon when the

blackened remains of mother and

daughter lay there side by side, and

near them stood a strong man, a husband

and father, whose grief was too great for

tears.

It is only since the death of Mrs. Har-

risson that more than half a dozen per-

sons have known how she, on that sad

occasion, took pity upon the grief of Sec-

retary Tracy, sympathized as only a

woman could with his yearning again

to behold the face of his wife, and with

her own hands, alone and secretly,

opened the casket as it lay in the East

room, spread flowers over the cruel

wounds the fire had made, and then led

the secretary to the spot and left him

with his dead.

How many such scenes the East room

has witnessed—how many tragedies have

played one or another of their acts with-

in its beautiful walls! Though the White

House is now nearly a hundred years

old, it is a remarkable fact that for more

than forty years not one death occurred

in the families of its inmates. During

the last half century the grim reaper

has more than made up for lost time.

April 4, 1841, the president's house

was for the first time wrapped in mourn-

ing. On that day President William

Henry Harrison died, just one month

after his inauguration, his fatal illness

having been brought on by exposure to

the storm on inauguration day. Funeral

services were held in the East room.

No sermon was preached, but Rev. Haw-

ley pointed to a Bible and prayer book

lying on a table near the bier, which, he

said, had been the daily companions of

the deceased, and added that but for the

president's illness he would have united

with the church the previous Sunday.

The casket containing the president's

remains was placed upon a temporary

catafalque in the East room, and upon it

was a pall of black velvet, with a gold

fringe. On the coffin lay the sword of

justice and the sword of state, surmount-

ed by the scroll of the constitution, and

bound together by a funeral wreath

formed of the yew and the cypress.

Near the catafalque stood the new pres-

ident, Mr. Tyler, Daniel Webster, Henry

Clay, John Quincy Adams and other

famous men, the diplomatic corps and

Congress being grouped just behind

them. The funeral procession was an

imposing one. Six white horses drew

the funeral car, each horse led by a

black groom dressed in white, with

white turban and sash. The military

followed, and fired a salute at the vault

in the Congressional cemetery.

Having made a start in the home of

the presidents, death did not wait long

before resuming his labors there. In

September, 1842, Mrs. Tyler, wife of

Harrison's successor, died in the White

House. A sweet pen picture of Mrs.

Tyler and her family was drawn by one

of her daughters-in-law in a private let-

ter, as follows:

Nothing can exceed the loneliness of this

large and gloomy mansion, hung with black

its walls echoing only sighs and groans. My

poor husband suffered dreadfully when he

was told his mother's eyes were constantly

turned to the door watching for him. She

had everything about her to awaken love. She

was beautiful to the eye even in her illness;

her complexion was clear as an infant's, her

figure perfect, and her hands and feet were

the most delicate I ever saw. She was refined

and gentle in everything she said and did. She

was my beau ideal of a perfect gentlewoman.

The devotion of father and sons to her was

most affecting. I don't think I ever saw her

enter a room that all three did not spring up

to offer her a chair; to arrange her footstool;

to dress and pet her.

Before the close of the Tyler admin-

istration occurred a terrible tragedy in

which the White House bore a part. A

big gun on the warship Princeton ex-

ploded while a party of dignitaries were

being entertained on board by Commor-

stockton and Secretaries Upshur

and Gilmer, of the Tyler cabinet, and

Mr. Gardner, of New York, were in-

stantly killed, along with three or four

sailors. In a somewhat romantic way

President Tyler escaped their fate. He

was then much in love with Mr. Gar-

dner's daughter, and was with others lis-

tening to the young lady sing in the

cabin. The president had just started

to join his cabinet ministers on deck

when Miss Gardner began another song,

whereupon Tyler returned to her side.

At that moment the explosion occurred.

The two cabinet ministers and Mr.

Gardner were buried from the East

room, and five months later Miss Gar-

dner became Mrs. Tyler and mistress of

the White House.

In 1850 President Taylor died in the

White House. Of all the deaths in the

mansion this was one of the saddest,

viewed from the standpoint of the be-

reaved partner. Mrs. Taylor had de-

scribed the Garfield tragedy.

plored her husband's nomination for the

presidency. She had followed General

Taylor through all his wars, sharing his

tent and his privations, and during the

remainder of her life she wanted him to

herself. His nomination she denounced

as "a plot to deprive me of his society;

to shorten his life by unnecessary care

and responsibility." Her words proved

prophecy, for he sacrificed his life in the

dedication of the Washington monu-

ment. The weather was extremely hot,

and the president drank large quantities

of ice water and partook freely of fruit,

bringing on the fatal illness. On his

death Mrs. Taylor became insensible,

and the agonized cries of the family

were heard out on Pennsylvania avenue.

Mrs. Taylor's heart was broken, and

she survived her husband only two

years. She never mentioned the White

House except in its relation to his death.

After he became president General Tay-

lor said his wife had prayed every day

for two months that Henry Clay might

be elected instead of himself.

In May, 1861, Colonel Ellsworth, one

of the first victims of the war, was bur-

ied from the East room, the simple but

impressive military service doing more

than any battle to fire the northern

heart.

Willie Lincoln, second son of the pre-

sident, died in the White House in 1862.

Mr. Lincoln said this blow was the sad-

dest of his life; the most difficult to

bear. The guests' room, in which he

died, Mrs. Lincoln never entered again.

President Lincoln did not die in the

White House, but his body lay in state

in the East room, and there women scat-

tered flowers upon his breast, rugged

soldiers bent down to kiss his face, and

great crowds of people—rich and poor,

black and white—came to weep.

Mrs. Grant's father, Frederick Dent,

died in the White House in 1873. To

the same room in which Mrs. Harrison

died General Garfield was tenderly car-

ried, and there he lay and suffered for

several weeks. During the Arthur ad-

ministration, and while a New Year's

reception was being held at the White

House, Elisha Allen, minister from Haw-

aii, fell fatally stricken within a few

feet of the president and his gay party,

thus bringing the reception to a sudden

end.

These are the notable tragedies of the

White House. How many other traged-

ies of life and death, death warrants

signed and pardons refused, hearts

broken and lives ruined, have occurred

within its walls!

WALTER WELLMAN.

BURIAL OF PRESIDENT HARRISON.

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